

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION HEARING ON WORKFORCE READINESS

Testimony of Jeffrey Wood

April 27, 2011

Good Afternoon, My name is Jeffrey Wood and I am currently a senior at Theodore Roosevelt Senior High School.

In the summer of 2009, I had a wonderful opportunity to travel abroad to Beijing, China for six weeks. I was able to embrace the Chinese culture, language, and see a broader view in life. When I got back from China, my view on the world, my community, and my life had changed forever. I instantly got rid of the stereotypes that I once had before my visit.

We visited McDonalds, Disney, and Coca-Cola. I did not know that these companies were this global until my visit to China. Places that we visit on a daily basis, are that vast. I think that China has taught me that very soon, American schools are going to have to include some type of global language and culture program. This world is so interconnected today that we would be doing a disservice to our future generation by not doing this.

Even now when you apply for a job, being bilingual is almost now a requirement for most entry level career jobs across America. Sooner or later, being bilingual will be a requirement for jobs. America is beginning to be very diverse and we have to adapt to it.

Attending a DC high school has been beneficial in some ways and has been not beneficial in others. Getting a decent education was beneficial and meeting some great teachers was another plus. What was not beneficial was not being exposed to other languages besides Spanish and French. I feel as though that these languages are thrown in your face just so you can fulfill that requirement on your transcript. If students had more choices of languages to choose from then I think people would be more interested in learning languages. In my opinion, DC students are not prepared for the workforce because of this reason. Yes, they can prepare a simple resume and attend work-readiness programs but jobs today are looking for diversity and something different that stands out of every job applicant. DCPS should require a foreign language and culture program in every school starting from elementary on up so that kids can be exposed to these experiences. When I went to China, I was left behind compared to other schools across America because they had multiple languages to learn from while my school only had two languages.

Study abroad should be a requirement for all high schools students. By doing this, you are exposing high school students with the experiences they need in order to be successful in the workplace. Such as interaction with different types of people, learning from other cultures and teamwork.

If DC does not have a global program in schools soon, DC will always be left behind when it comes to technology and jobs.